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SUBJECT Rise in Student Demonstrations

[Clip of student demonstration]

CHARLES GIBSON: Berkeley, California. University of California students demonstrate against apartheid.

Boulder, Colorado. Students there take issue with CIA recruiters on campus.

Madison, Wisconsin. Students from the campus there march on the state capital to protest U.S. policy in Central America.

Good evening. I'm Charles Gibson. And this is Nightline.

In the 1960s, protests and demonstrations were a way of life on American campuses. Is there a resurgence of student activism underway today? We'll talk with a protester who was wounded in the Kent State University shootings 15 years ago, and with a present-day student protest leader from Brown University.

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It happened on May 4th, 1970, 15 years ago. Ohio National Guardsmen on the campus of Kent State University fired rifles into a crowd of protesting students who were throwing rocks and stones. Four students were killed, nine wounded. Fifteen years ago. Those were the days when student activism was at its height, when the war put a generation at odds with its elders.

Some say today there's a rebirth of student activism

coming to campuses. The tactics, in many cases, are the same, but so much is different.

[Clip of student demonstration]

MAN: I thought it was going to end the war.

MAN: You see, I was brought up to think that if I wanted something, I worked hard for it, I'd get it. There was no two ways about it. That's the middle-class ethos. We were just going to make the bombs stop falling.

WOMAN: Everybody was really touched directly by the war in Vietnam. And it also came after a passionate time of action in this country in the form of civil rights. You know, television brought into people's living rooms something that shocked, shocked people and made young people and students want to, quote, do something, make them mobilize, feel that they could do something [unintelligible].

MAN: We're sitting here at the sundial. This is called the sundial at Columbia. If you'd been here 17 years ago, in 1968, there would have been some student up here with a bullhorn, surrounded by probably three or four or five hundred other students. And he would have been denouncing Columbia University's participation in the Vietnam War through doing war research on contract to the Pentagon.

In 1968 Tom Hayden and Abby Hoffman were sitting in Mathematics Hall with me and the other Columbia kids.

MAN: Columbia was only one part of that year's agony. Student strikes, the Chicago demonstrations, most of all the assassination of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King made that the worst year of my life, and certainly one of the worst years in the 20th Century for our country. The country, I think, lost its innocence in that year.

MAN: It got very violent in the end. It was what has been generally referred to as a police riot. When 720 students and faculty were arrested on this campus, 150 had to be treated in local hospitals. So where we're sitting right here was wet and sticky with human blood.

[Music]

MAN: Kent State was 1970. That's where four students were killed by the National Guard. I remember thinking this is what it leads to, that we're going to kill people, which is what happened at the University of Wisconsin. When the Mathematics Center was bombed by anti-war activists a person was killed. And

then at Kent State and Jackson State.

MAN: We had exhausted ourselves in fury and frustration. And I think there needed to be a time for a settling in of many of the changes that had occurred.

MAN: The Me Decade of the '70s was the necessary period of rest. You can't just be going all out all the time.

Another thing is you need a focus, you need something that you can rally around. In 1968 it was the war in Vietnam. Today it's apartheid.

MAN: I think today's student wants to be morally effective, but not at the expense of their studies, if they can avoid it.

WOMAN: This is not a time when people talk about sacrifices. This is a time when people talk about feeling good about yourself, about taking care of yourself first, basically thinking up, finding a guru, getting hypnotized, sitting in a hot tub. So maybe it's very radical that they walk out of one class.

MAN: If they can be effective with the efforts that are underway, then why get into trying to duplicate whatever was done or not done by your older brother and sister back in the '60s? If it wasn't for the students, nothing would be happening. They're the only force in American life that's trying to call us to conscience, to do something about apartheid.

[Clip of demonstration]

MAN: This orderliness, peacefulness, or even politeness, I attribute to the fact that they lost the fire of disillusion. We were enraged, we were disillusioned. They never had any illusions. They grew up in an America of the assassinations, Vietnam, Watergate. We grew up in an America of Ike, togetherness, and tailfins. I think they never really expected anything of America, so they didn't feel totally betrayed or enraged by it. So they had a more measured response.

[Music]

GIBSON: When we come back we're going to be joined by a former student activist, Alan Kanfora (?), who was one of the students wounded during the Kent State shootings on May 4th, 1970; and by a present-day student, Juliette Brody (?) of Brown University.

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GIBSON: On the Kent State University campus tonight, an

all-night vigil is underway to commemorate the shootings of 15 years ago. You're looking at a live picture from Kent State, where a thousand are marching tonight. And they're going to gather shortly at the site of the shootings.

Joining us now live from the campus of Kent State University in Kent is Alan Kanfora, who was one of those wounded 15 years ago when National Guardsmen fired on campus demonstrators at Kent State. Kanfora currently lectures on college campuses about the activism of the 1960s, and he's writing a book about student protest.

And from our Boston Bureau, Juliette Brody, a senior at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, co-founder of a student peace organization and organizer of protests against CIA recruitment on the Brown campus.

Alan, let's start with you. What differences do you see between demonstrations in the 1970s and late '60s and demonstrations now?

ALAN KANFORA: Well, Charles, I think the first thing that should be pointed out is the fact that, unlike 1970, the situation now is much calmer, socially and politically, in America. For example, first of all, you don't have a form of social terror affecting the young men of the population all across America. And when I say social terror, I'm referring to the draft.

GIBSON: So you're saying, effectively, that the kids of today aren't at risk.

KANFORA: They're not only not at risk because of the draft, but also, fortunately, at this present time we don't have an unpopular, unjust foreign war of intervention, such as the Vietnam War. But that situation could change rapidly.

GIBSON: All right. But is there -- they also don't have an issue. I mean there is no -- I remember in the days of the late '60s, early '70s, Vietnam was what everybody talked about. There is probably no central galvanizing issue like that today, is there?

KANFORA: Well, fortunately, we don't have the severe foreign policy crisis, which I think has been the case down through the whole 20th Century whenever you've had a national student protest going on. But I think with the new protests against apartheid and with the concerns about nuclear war and other issues, I think what you're seeing is perhaps the beginning of a powerful new student movement in this country.

GIBSON: Juliette, am I being fair? Is there a

galvanizing issue in this country?

JULIETTE BRODY: Well, I agree with Alan that there's no general movement. I do think that the apartheid issue has been galvanizing the past few months, specifically. But I agree that there is no one central issue. Although, as Alan mentioned, the nuclear threat and the Central American situation, as well as apartheid, are all generally gaining momentum across campuses.

GIBSON: You listened to James Kiernan (?) in that piece, who was part of the Columbia demonstrations back in the '60s, and Tom Hayden. And they were sort of tough on you. I mean Joan Baez was saying, well, I guess it's radical for them if they cut one class. They're mostly kids who are worried about whether they're going to get ahead today. And Kiernan said we were were enraged, and the kids today aren't.

Is that true?

BRODY: Well, I think it is important to recognize that this is a different cultural and historical context than the 1960s. I think the movement of the 1960s was characterized not only by political movement, but also cultural movement, and broad repudiation and rejection of many aspects of American culture. And that isn't happening today, I see it, on campus.

However, the political activism that is gaining momentum, I think, is becoming stronger more confrontational. And as it continues to grow, the tactics are also changing.

GIBSON: Okay. You raised the word confrontation. I guess when you get yourself involved in student protests, you realize going in that the majority of people are against you. You really have to overcome a public that believes you're wrong, don't you?

BRODY: To some extent. Although I think we've all been very heart-warmed to see the positive response that we've been met with, also. I think people are, in a way, happy to see students become active again, become interested again, take responsibility for their country's policies and their universities' policies.

GIBSON: What possible evidence do you have that people are happy to see you demonstrating again?

BRODY: Well, I know on our campus, when we protested CIA recruitment, it began as a very confrontational issue and most of the student body, I'd say at first glance, were very skeptical. They didn't want to see anyone speaking out. But by the time our hearing came up, those of us who participated in the

action were brought before the university on disciplinary charges, and I'd say 700 students sat in on that open hearing. And by the end, they were all on their feet applauding our actions.

GIBSON: Al, do you agree with Juliette that the public is pleased to see kids demonstrating again?

KANFORA: Well, personally, I think that in a democracy such as we have here in America, where we all cherish our constitutional rights and our freedoms, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to dissent, I think it's a very healthy aspect of our modern society that the students are coming forward to perhaps once again act as the conscience of the country.

GIBSON: Healthy, yes. But is there any evidence that people are particularly glad to see demonstrations rising up again on the campuses? We know there is the right of free speech, etcetera. But what evidence is there that people are happy about this?

KANFORA: Well, I think people of conscience and thinking Americans should be happy that we do have this vitality in our system, where we free to discuss the issues and hopefully try to prevent some things from happening again, such as a Vietnam-style conflict or another Kent State.

GIBSON: Let me take a break for a moment. We'll come back to the two of you. And when we come back we'll also be joined by Seymour Martin Lipset, a Stanford University sociologist who has been chronicling student activism for 20 years now.

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GIBSON: With us now live in our San Francisco Bureau is Professor Seymour Martin Lipset of Stanford University, a sociologist who has specialized in studying the role of student activism on American campuses.

Professor Lipset, you've seen the old and you've seen the new. Do we make a mistake in even talking about student activism today in comparison to the '60s? Do you take this new move seriously toward student activism?

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET: Well, I think it certainly doesn't compare to what happened from the mid-'60s up to the early '70s. But the mid-'60s didn't just develop out of nothing. If you look back at that period, there was the beginnings of student activism, of a revival of it in the late '60s, in '58, '59. And it grew gradually. In the early '60s it was concerned

with civil rights. And then with the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, there's a kind of shifting-over point. It went from there into a mass movement concerning the Vietnam War.

So that the movement of '65 and on really emerged gradually out of a growing movement that started in '59 and '60. And this could be the beginning of something, or it could not. No one can really tell.

GIBSON: I raised the question of whether there's really a galvanizing issue today. Apartheid seems to have caught the interest of many students on many campuses. There are other issues. But is there really any issue comparable to civil rights or Vietnam?

LIPSET: No, I don't think there is. Apartheid, as you say. Apartheid, in one sense, is the perfect issue because it's an issue that everybody is against. I mean everybody's against apartheid. Not just the students; the faculty, the Republican Party, Ronald Reagan. There's almost no defender of apartheid in the United States. And therefore you can be at the cutting edge of the issue without fearing that anybody's fighting you. And the adult world dissents, pats the students on the head and says, "Good. Your tactics may be a little too aggressive, but really we agree with you on the issue."

And that, of course, was also true for the early civil rights movement.

GIBSON: You know, we tend to talk about these things in somewhat romanticized terms, I guess, when we go back. Those were very violent days, in the Vietnam demonstration days. But there is a downside to all this? I mean can there be negative effects that were down from students getting...

LIPSET: Well, there was a downside in the '60s, and the downside was the politicization of the university, the conflict of the university.

Many universities, Berkeley, Columbia, Harvard, were bitterly divided. Not over the question of the war, but over the question of whether the university itself should become the center of political action against the rest of society. And faculties and student bodies became terribly argumentative. There were political parties formed among the faculty who were pro and against the activity. And down to the present -- that is, down to 1985 -- if you visit some departments at Berkeley, you won't find people speaking to each other because of the positions they took in 1965.

GIBSON: Let me follow up on that point for just a sec,

because universities really are designed, I guess, to teach kids special responsibility and a sense of what they can achieve. Isn't it really almost then sort of a responsibility of a student -- I may be taking it a little far -- but if they're going to exercise the social responsibility that they're taught on campus, isn't it really sort of their duty to get out and try to change things?

LIPSET: Oh, right. Certainly I wouldn't question it, and many people would not. But the issue isn't whether the students or anybody, as individuals or as a group, get active in politics. The issue then, or at least one of the issues then, was really whether the university itself should become the source of action.

For example, I was at Harvard at the time of the Harvard major action and police bust and the like. And at that time, there was an effort made at Harvard and Princeton and many other places to actually get the university to call off classes, give students credit for courses while they were engaged in political action. And I remember at the time Stewart Hughes, who is now a professor at the University of California at San Diego and who had been a leader of the anti-war movement, a third-party candidate for senator, got up and bitterly denounced this protest, and said when he took part in action, ran against the war, he met every class, he did everything he had to do. He didn't ask the university to act as a protector for him.

And that issue of whether the university itself should be a political organ, or the individual should be, because an issue that divided the campus.

BRODY: Charlie, I'd like to jump in here.

I think it's important to remember that -- I don't think it's appropriate to make students responsible for politicizing the university. I think it's one of the illusions of our society that the university is a haven from politics. I think that by its very -- the university itself is a politicized institutions.

For example, I just read in the Providence newspaper this week that Brown University has chosen to be one of the universities to do some of the Star Wars research. And I think that that is a political decision.

I think that universities that have investments in South Africa, those are political decisions. Students don't politicize the institutions. The institutions are political themselves...

GIBSON: Wait a minute. Let me pick you up on that point.

You organized some demonstrations and you tried to have a citizen's arrest of CIA recruiters who were on the Brown campus.

BRODY: Right.

GIBSON: And you wanted to take them off the campus. Now, don't you politicize that issue? Don't they have a right of free speech, to come to the Brown campus and say whatever? The students don't have to go and be interviewed or be recruited. They can stay away. But don't you deny those recruiters their right of free speech when you do that?

BRODY: Well, the point of our action -- it's very important to remember that our action was a citizen's arrest. It was not a simple demonstration. Our contention was that not all speech is protected. And I would fight as strongly as anyone for freedom of speech. But our contention was that recruitment is not speech as such, but that the recruiter there -- because we believe that the CIA participates in crimes, that it violates national and international law, that to ask students to work for the CIA constitutes solicitation. And therefore, to commit a citizen's arrest, we were trying to prevent a crime, not to just disrupt a speech.

And that was a point -- it's a very subtle point, I'll grant, but it is an important one. It was the real -- the basis of our action.

GIBSON: But you politicized that cam -- I mean how do you say that the [unintelligible] politicized? It seems to me you're politicizing...

BRODY: I think that a university that gives the privilege of recruitment to an organization that, by many people, and not just radical students, admission, commits violations of national law, I think that is a political act, to give the privilege of recruitment...

LIPSET: Might I ask you, would you deny the Communist Party or the Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan the right to appear on campus?

BRODY: Well, I think, as I said, there's a difference between recruitment and speech. I would not prohibit -- if anyone came to give a lecture at Brown University, I would not support disrupting with it. But I think that to ask someone to come and participate in the actions of that organization, which I think are in violation of national law, that is not a speech.

GIBSON: Alan, we have about a minute left...

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LIPSET: That isn't, basically, what freedom of speech means. But we don't have time to argue it.

GIBSON: Let me move on for a second.

Alan, we have about a minute left. And let me ask you quickly where you think the movement goes now.

KANFORA: Well, I think that the students of today look back at the 1960s and '70s, the resistance-to-the-Vietnam-War era, with a sense of pride. In the whole history of the student movement of this country, the Vietnam War era was the peak of that student movement's history. And in May of 1970, after the invasion of Cambodia and after Kent State, that was the ultimate point in all the history of our country.

So students now, I think, are starting to build on that tradition, and I think it's a very healthy thing in our society.

GIBSON: Professor Lipset, the last 20 seconds are yours.

LIPSET: Well, I think the protest against the Vietnam War accomplished a great deal. And students should be involved in protest. The only think that concerns me is whether they demand that the university join them as a political force. As long as students or faculty or anyone else engage in political action as individuals or as a group, that's fine and should be encouraged.

GIBSON: All right.